

## Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-02 INR-07

L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-02 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-15 HA-05 /075 W

-----015153 170748Z /13

R 161629Z NOV 77

FM AMCONSUL BELFAST

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1800

INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

UNCLAS BELFAST 316

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, UK, EI

SUBJECT: SECTARIAN FEELING IN NORTHERN IRELAND

1. ANYONE WHO WATCHES NORTHERN IRELAND UNDERSTANDS THE IMPORTANCE OF THE DEEP FEELINGS OR EVEN HATRED BETWEEN THE MAJORITY AND MINORITY COMMUNITIES, NORMALLY IDENTIFIED AS PROTESTANT OR CATHOLIC. NORMALLY SUCH FEELINGS DO NOT OBTRUDE IN THE PROVINCE'S ANNUAL OBSERVANCE OF REMEMBRANCE DAY -- THE REVERENT CELEBRATION OF THE WORLD WAR I AND II DEAD, WHICH OCCURRED THIS YEAR ON NOVEMBER 13. BUT LAST SUNDAY'S CELEBRATION IN BALLYMENA, A PROVINCIAL CENTER 25 MILES NORTHWEST OF BELFAST PRODUCED AN INCIDENT OF INTOLERANCE THAT WOULD BE RIDICULOUS WERE IT NOT SO INDICATIVE OF NI'S TRAGEDY.

2. FOR YEARS THE BRITISH LEGION HAD ORGANIZED BALLYMENA'S CEREMONY, UNDER CITY COUNCIL AUSPICES. THIS YEAR THE LEGION NAMED A CATHOLIC PRIEST TO OFFICIATE -- A PRIEST WHO HAD SERVED MANY YEARS AS A ROYAL NAVY CHAPLAIN AND BELONGS TO THE LOCAL LEGION. THE COUNCIL'S MAJORITY -- BY ONE -- BELONGS TO THE REVEREND IAN PAISLEY'S DEMOCRATIC UNIONIST PARTY, A GROUP SO FUNDAMENTALLY "LOYALIST" THAT IT QUESTIONS HMG'S LOYALTY.

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USING A CLEARLY PROCEDURAL EXCUSE, THE MAYOR DISALLOWED THE LEGION'S ARRANGEMENTS AND SET ABOUT ARRANGING HIS OWN OFFICIAL CEREMONY. THE FIRST CHURCHMAN ASKED TO OFFICIATE, A CONGREGATIONALIST, TURNED IT DOWN AFTER HAVING TALKED WITH HIS CHURCH. THE LOCAL COUNCIL OF CHURCHES SAID IT COULD NOT PRODUCE ANYONE TO OFFICIATE AND ON THE THIRD ROUND THE MAYOR FINALLY CAME UP WITH A YOUNG "INDEPENDENT METHODIST".

3. BALLYMENA THUS HAD TWO CEREMONIES -- THE FIRST RUN BY THE LEGION, WITH THE CITY COUNCILLORS OF THE MINORITY (LED BY AN OFFICIAL UNIONIST), MOST OF THE UNIFORMED VETERANS, AND A PRIEST WHO PRAYED FOR THE QUEEN. THE MAYOR, HIS COUNCILORS AND A CONSIDERABLY SMALLER GROUP LISTENED TO A PRAYER WHICH OMITTED THE QUEEN.

4. COMMENT: THE INCIDENT SHOWS THAT THE STEROTYPE OF PROTESTANT MAJORITY AND CATHOLIC MINORITY IS TOO SIMPLE. THE DUP IS STILL FIGHTING THE THIRTY YEARS WAR, BUT THE PREDOMINANTLY PROTESTANT BRITISH LEGION THINKS FIRST OF MORE RECENT STRUGGLES.

STOUT

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## Message Attributes

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**Review Markings:**  
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